

Subject:	Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2014/15	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Council	Date:	11 th December 2013
Report of:	Head of Customer Services & I.C.T.	Portfolio Holder:	Finance and Resources
Key Decision:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required:	No	Attached: No
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required:	No	Attached: No
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1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	That Full Council approve the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2014/15 as set out in this report.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To seek approval of Rossendale Borough Council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2014/15.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:

- **Regenerating Rossendale:** This priority focuses on regeneration in its broadest sense, so it means supporting communities that get on well together, attracting sustainable investment, promoting Rossendale, as well as working as an enabler to promote the physical regeneration of Rossendale.
- **Responsive Value for Money Services:** This priority is about the Council working collaboratively, being a provider, procurer and a commissioner of services that are efficient and that meet the needs of local people.
- **Clean Green Rossendale:** This priority focuses on clean streets and town centres and well managed open spaces, whilst recognising that the Council has to work with communities and as a partner to deliver this ambition.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Local Council Tax Support Scheme is subject to annual approval, by full Council.

The Local Government Finance Bill states that an Authority must make any revision to its scheme, or any replacement scheme, **no later than 31 January** in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to have effect.

5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 5.1 Council Tax Benefit was replaced by a Local Scheme of Council Tax Support in April, 2013.

Funding to Local authorities to pay for this support was reduced in 2013/14 from 100% subsidy to a grant of 90 % (£871K). This grant has now been merged into the main local authority funding.

- 5.2 The Local Government Finance Bill states that an Authority must make any revision to its

scheme, or any replacement scheme, no later than 31 January in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to have effect.

- 5.3 The scheme approved and adopted by Rossendale Borough Council for 2013/14 matched the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme but with a 20% reduction in entitlement for those of working age. We consulted extensively on this scheme and it was broadly supported.
- 5.4 Late in 2012 transitional funding was made available by the Government, for one year only, for councils who limited the reduction in entitlement to 8.5% in 2013/14. It was decided at Full Council to accept this funding and limit the reduction to 8.5% but for 2013/14 only.
- 5.5 Our Local Council Tax Support scheme is based, in a large part, on the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme. As such it remains a means tested benefit in all but name.
- 5.6 During the last 12 months there have been a number of changes to supporting legislation. These changes will not have a material impact on the amount of Local Council Tax Support awarded but do mean that we need to update our scheme.
- 5.7 The Government recognises the need to maintain and uprate the income disregards, nondependent deductions, applicable amounts and premiums for pensioner cases and have therefore instructed local authorities to increase these in line with other social security benefits for 2014/15.
- 5.8 In order to ensure that our scheme for working age claimants continues to mirror the Housing Benefit scheme, and the scheme applicable to pensioners, it is necessary to uprate it in the same way as those schemes.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

6. SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 6.1 The Council's default scheme has been accounted for in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

7. MONITORING OFFICER

- 7.1 No comments to add.

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 8.1 Extensive consultation was undertaken from 6th August 2012 to 26th October 2012 to inform the development of the currently adopted scheme including a full equality impact assessment to inform the decision making process.

This report is not proposing any changes to this scheme for 2014/15. It is determined that the potential impact and mitigating actions remain unchanged also, and therefore has not been re-assessed for equalities impacts.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 On 12th December 2012 Full Council were presented with a number of options and approved Option A as its default scheme. (Initial Council Tax Support entitlement is calculated

according to existing arrangements and then subject to a 20% reduction, in order to calculate the final Council Tax Support entitlement).

- 9.2 Approval was also given for the acceptance of the Department for Communities and Local Government's One year Transitional Grant.
- 9.3 There are no significant changes from the scheme approved for 2013/14.
- 9.4 At the time of writing there has been no announcement of any further transitional funding for 2014/15.
- 9.5 It is proposed to continue with the scheme approved in December 2012, minus the transitional grant, but including benefit uprating and supporting legislative changes, for 2014/15.

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Council Tax Support Scheme	http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/counciltaxsupportscheme